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Ex-terrorist tells CIA ties

A former right-wing terrorist says the CIA helped finance and direct his organization in exchange for records stolen in burglaries of antiwar and radical groups' offices.

He said that Army and Air Force intelligence units also shared in the stolen documents, as did the so-called "Red Squad" of the Chicago Police Department.

In return, he said, the police department gave the terror group a form of immunity from arrest, although it knew about the burglaries and other criminal activities.

ALTHOUGH THE MAN GAVE me specific detail about his organization and activities—much of which I have confirmed—I'm omitting his identification and most details from the story because he is afraid of reprisal.

"I've already received word from somebody on the Red Squad that it would be dangerous for anyone to talk about them."

He said members of the highly secret Chicago police unit fear that testimony such as his could lead to their prosecution.

Charges of illegal activities have recently been filed against the Red Squad by numerous Chicago antiwar and political activists. And, of course, the CIA is under investigation for violating its charter by engaging in domestic spy activities.

The man decided to tell me about his activities because, he says, he has changed his political views during the last couple of years.

"At the time I was involved, I thought I was doing the right thing. It was the flag and country bit. Now I realize that what I did was fascist. And fascism is both un-American and anti-American."

He also said that he wanted someone to know what he had done in case something should later happen to him.

HE SAID HE BECAME involved in the right-wing group during the late 1960s, when antiwar activities were at their peak, and he became convinced that they posed a threat to the country.

"The man who was in charge of the organization was the direct contact to the CIA. I was with him several times when he would meet with a CIA agent to talk about information they were interested in getting.

"I was also with him when he met with agents from the Army and Air Force. As for the Red Squad, I had direct contact with several of them myself.

"The man in charge would tell us what they wanted and where we might find it. Then it was a matter of our planning the burglary, just as you'd plan any other burglary. We'd get an infiltrator inside to case the place, we'd study the janitorial service, and so on. Then we'd break in and clean the place out.

"In a way, it was funny. The burglaries would be reported to the police. Then a few days later, we'd be giving the police copies of records we had taken in the burglaries.

"The leader of our organization had excellent contacts in the John Birch Society, which was helpful because there are important people in it, and this gave us access to office duplicating equipment. We needed that because we were feeding the information we got to several agencies."

BESIDES COMMITTING BURGLARIES, the man said, the organization planted bugs in the office of antiwar groups.

"They were small, sophisticated devices. All you had to do was stick them under a table, a desk, or anywhere else they wouldn't be noticed. They were given to us by the guy in charge. Then it was simply a matter of using some pretense to get into the office of the person who was to be bugged, and planting it.

"We never knew where the other end was, the receiver. Nobody in our organization was involved in that, so we assumed that one of the agencies we worked with was doing the monitoring.

The terror tactics included physical beatings, harassment, threats, and disruptions of meetings.

"We did anything we could to be obnoxious. We planted false booby traps in cars, we vandalized the places they lived, made them think they were being constantly watched, and tried to break up their rallies.

"If anyone was arrested, they'd usually beat the case in court. And sometimes we'd be saved from arrest right on the spot. For instance, once a bunch of us showed up at a rally, caused trouble, and turned it into a brawl. When we took off, the police grabbed us. I mean, they had us, witnesses and everything. But the Red Squad guys showed up and told the regular cops to let us go. That was it. We just drove away."

DURING ALL THESE ACTIVITIES, the source said, he was never without enough money to live on, even though he didn't work.

"Money wasn't any problem for me and several others. If I needed money for anything, I just told the leader of the organization and he'd come up with it. I heard him make phone calls and tell the person he was calling how much he needed. He told me he was getting it from the CIA. I know one thing — it wasn't his. When it came to his own money, he was a cheapskate.

"Money wasn't a problem, and neither were other things — the tools we needed for burglaries, tear gas for harassment, weapons and so on. We'd tell him what we needed, and he'd get it."

Despite the changes in his political views, the man said he has been afraid to take his information to any of the agencies that have been investigating such matters.

"Why should I trust them? These local prosecutors, what were they doing back then? Some of them were involved in the same kind of thing. If they start poking around in it, they'll wind up looking at themselves in a mirror."